

BA-3051
Cowdensville African American Survey District
Baltimore County
1847-1950

Established during the mid-19th century, Cowdensville is a small African-American community located in the southwestern section of Baltimore County. The community was established in the first half of the 19th century, prior to 1847. This is suggested by a run-away slave advertisement in the Baltimore Sun on May 1, 1847 that used the name CrowdenTown. Arrow Spike, including a large area surrounding Crowdensville, was the original name of the area. Arrow Spike was deeded by Enoch Pratt to George Hawkins in the mid-19th century. His daughter, Alice Hawkins Tyler, received the land through his last will and testament. Alice Tyler sold the land south of Sulphur Spring Road to the Scott family.

Cowdensville developed as an African-American community in the mid-19th century. It is situated near the small towns of Avalon and Arbutus in the Thirteenth District of Baltimore County. The five streets in the community are Sulphur Spring Road, Garrett Road (known by the residents as the bottom), Shelbourne Road, Circle Terrace, and Brown Terrace. The community consists of a total of thirty-two dwellings, one converted schoolhouse, one church, and one unmarked cemetery. The residential building stock is comprised of vernacular dwellings that lack stylistic elements. These modest dwellings include the Gothic Revival style, Bungalow forms, Tudor style, and Colonial Revival Cape Cods, and ranch and minimal traditional forms. All of the dwellings are constructed of wood frame with a few clad with formstone. Replacement cladding includes asbestos shingles, aluminum siding, and vinyl siding. The foundations of the earlier houses are random-rubble stone. The later examples feature brick foundations and the non-historic dwellings have poured concrete foundations.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-3051

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Cowdensville African American Survey District

other

2. Location

street and number	Sulphur Spring Road, Shelbourne Road, Garrett Road	not for publication
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city, town	Cowdensville	vicinity
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county Baltimore County

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name	multiple ownership
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street and number	telephone	Not Available
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city, town state zip code

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse tax map and parcel: tax map 108

city, town	Towson	liber	folio
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5. Primary Location of Additional Data

☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report
☐ Other

6. Classification

Category		Ownership		Current Function		Resource Count		
						Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district	<input type="checkbox"/>	public	<input type="checkbox"/>	landscape	<u>16</u>	<u>12</u>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private	<input type="checkbox"/>	commerce/trade	<u>1</u>		sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	both	<input type="checkbox"/>	defense			structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	site			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	domestic			objects
<input type="checkbox"/>	object			<input type="checkbox"/>	education			
				<input type="checkbox"/>	funerary	<u>17</u>	<u>16</u>	Total
				<input type="checkbox"/>	government			
				<input type="checkbox"/>	health care			
				<input type="checkbox"/>	industry			
				<input type="checkbox"/>	other:			
						Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory		
						1		

7. Description

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Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Cowdensville developed as an African-American community in the mid-19th century. It is situated near the small towns of Avalon and Arbutus in the Thirteenth District of Baltimore County. The crossroads community consists of an area approximately fourteen acres. The five streets in the community are Sulphur Spring Road, Garrett Road (known by the residents as the bottom), Shelbourne Road, Circle Terrace, and Brown Terrace. The area is predominantly surrounded by the Arbutus Middle School and its environs to the northeast and the Arbutus Memorial Park to the south. New development is occurring at the south end of Circle Terrace.

Centered around Sulphur Spring Road, Cowdensville is a small rural community featuring irregular shaped lots and one small development. The development is called Brown's Terrace, which was platted in the 1940s. Set backs in Brown's Terrace are similar from one lot to the next with the houses slightly back from the road. Most of the dwellings have paved driveways. The lots throughout Cowdensville range from half an acre to several acres. The African Methodist Episcopal Church at the corner of Shelbourne Road and Sulphur Springs Road sits on one of the smaller lots and is directly adjacent to the road.

The community consists of a total of thirty-two dwellings, one converted schoolhouse, one church, and one unmarked cemetery. The residential building stock is comprised of vernacular dwellings that lack stylistic elements. These modest dwellings include the Gothic Revival style, Bungalow forms, Tudor style, and Colonial Revival Cape Cods, and ranch and minimal traditional forms. All of the dwellings are constructed of wood frame with a few clad with formstone. Replacement cladding includes asbestos shingles, aluminum siding, and vinyl siding. The foundations of the earlier houses are random-rubble stone. The later examples feature brick foundations and the non-historic dwellings have poured concrete foundations.

Sulphur Spring Road travels east west through the center of Cowdensville. The majority of the extant buildings are concentrated to the north side of Sulphur Spring Road. The earliest development fronts Sulphur Spring and Garrett Roads. No longer extant the first church (also served as a residence) was located on Garrett Road. A cemetery associated with the Cowdensville Chapel is sited off Garrett Road. The headstones are no longer remaining and the graves are covered with overgrowth and vegetation. The schoolhouse at 6 Garrett Road, converted to a dwelling in the 1940s, is a wood frame vernacular building. It stands one-and-a-half stories high, measures three bays wide with a central entry, and is capped with a side-gable roof. Features include a double-leaf door on the façade, a shed-roof screened-porch addition, and replacement vinyl windows. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the dwelling is reclad with aluminum siding.

On the north side of Sulphur Spring Road are several early-20th-century dwellings featuring the Gothic Revival style. The circa 1900 wood-frame dwelling located at 1106 Sulphur Spring Road is a single-pile dwelling standing two-and-a-half stories in height and measuring three bays across. It is capped with a side-gable roof featuring a center cross gable. It rests on a random-rubble stone foundation and is clad with vinyl German siding. The windows and center entry door have been replaced. The roof features cornice returns and is clad with asphalt shingles. Covering the three bays on the first story is a replacement shed-roof porch supported with decorative metal posts. Neighboring this house at 1108 Sulphur Spring Road is another Gothic Revival style-dwelling. It is similar in form and materials except that it has a double-pile plan.

The dwellings built as part of Browns Terrace were constructed during the 1940s and 1950s. The houses are either one story or one-and-a-half stories in height and typically measure three bays wide. The dwellings rest on poured concrete foundations, are clad with vinyl siding, aluminum siding, or formstone, and are capped with a side-gable or hipped roof. Several of the dwellings have screened porches on the façade. A few of the dwellings have brick chimneys, which are either on the exterior-end or interior.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church at the corner of Shelbourne and Sulphur Spring Roads is representative of the vernacular Colonial Revival style. The triangle-shape lot required a cross-gable-roof building with an L-shaped footprint. Two entries are provided on the façade with the main entry located in the vestibule topped with a small steeple/tower. The double-leaf entry is

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topped with a stained-glass transom and the side elevations of the vestibule are illuminated with 1/1 stained-glass windows. The façade has three 1/1 stained-glass windows and a single-leaf door on the east side. The church rests on a random-rubble stone foundation and is clad with weatherboard siding.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates ca. 1847-1950

Architect/Builder Unknown

Construction dates ca. 1847-1950

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

Established during the mid-19th century, Cowdensville is a small African-American community located in the southwestern section of Baltimore County. The community was established in the first half of the 19th century, prior to 1847. This is suggested by a run-away slave advertisement in the Baltimore Sun on May 1, 1847 that used the name CrowdenTown.(1) Arrow Spike, including a large area surrounding Crowdensville, was the original name of the area. Arrow Spike was deeded by Enoch Pratt to George Hawkins in the mid-19th century. His daughter, Alice Hawkins Tyler, received the land through his last will and testament. Alice Tyler sold the land south of Sulphur Spring Road to the Scott family.

The 1840 Census lists the few residents as farm laborers. In 1850, the census lists the majority of the residents as agricultural workers. The exceptions are William Hawkins, a waiter for a white inn-keeper, and John Scott, a wagon driver. According to the 1850 Census fourteen heads of households were listed in the area. Residents that moved into the area between 1840 and 1850 included families such as Pine, Hawkins, and Byas.(2)

By the late 1850s, the residents in the area determined a place of worship was to be established. In 1857, the Cowdensville Chapel was providing services in a dwelling on Garrett Road. According to the 1870 census for Cowdensville, Stephen Boyd, Minister for the church, resided with William Garrett. The cemetery associated with the Cowdensville Chapel was abandoned and is no longer visible off Garrett Road. According to several of the residents the cemetery contains a few members of the Hawkins family.(3)

Information from the 1870 Census notes a few new families had joined the community, including the Jones, Collins, Parron, and Robinson. On the Hopkins Atlas of 1877, Sulphur Spring Road as well as the road north of it are in place, serving in the community. The names Jones, Scott, Garrett, and Williams are noted on the atlas, as well as the combined Cowdensville Church and School. Along the south side of Sulphur Spring Road are six dwellings.(4)

A one-room school, Colored School number 21 constructed in 1903, was located at 6 Garrett Avenue at the end of the street. It was used as a school during the early 20th century until it closed in 1939. The closing was relegated by Baltimore County at an attempt to consolidate small rural schools. At this time, students transferred to the African-American school in Halethorpe. The one-room school was then converted to a residence. Clifton Griffin is the resident owner of 6 Garrett Avenue at the turn of the 21st century.

Church services continued to be held in the Garrett residence until 1907 when the Cowdensville African Methodist Episcopal Church was constructed. In 1904, the corner lot at the intersection of Shelbourne Road and Sulphur Spring Road was purchased from Alice Hawkins Tyler by five local families including John Brown, the Fletchers, Garretts, Matthews, and the Williams, to build a church. The A.M.E. Church continues to be the center of the Cowdensville community as it was when it was established.

In 1910, approximately 20 households were listed in Cowdensville. The families that moved into the neighborhood since the 1870

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census include Brown, Dorsey, Tyler, and Cornish. The 1910 Census lists most people in Cowdensville as domestic workers. Several residents were employed by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Joshua Williams, a track walker, Samuel and Edward Fletcher, laborers, and Charles Robinson, a watchman. Other occupations in the 1910 Census include carpenter's helper, building foreman, gardener, and porter.(5)

By 1915, according to the Bromley Atlas, the area had significantly developed into a small crossroads community. The atlas shows five platted lots, each with a dwelling on the north side of Sulphur Spring Road. South of Sulphur Spring Road are fifteen lots and one separate road. Facing Sulphur Spring Road on the south side were five dwellings. Bordering Cowdensville is O.R. Benson to the northeast, Francis Estate Land Company to the northwest, and to the south is C.D. Benson with 8 acres and O.R. Benson. Nearby to the north is the Manual Labor School Farm, which opened in 1839.(6)

The 1930 U.S. Census lists seven families on Sulphur Spring Road in Cowdensville. They are as follows: Joshua Williams, John Williams, Charlie Williams, Mathias Mathews, Daniel Garrett, John Brown, and William Mathews. Interestingly, each of these families owned their property ranging in value from \$700 to \$5,000. All of the families are from Maryland with the exception of John Brown, who was from Virginia. Occupations of the residents included a railroad watchman, laborer, chauffeur, and a cook at a restaurant. The few women that were employed as domestic workers for private families.(7)

During the mid-20th century residents with non-domestic jobs included Mathias Matthews, a printer at the Bureau of Engraving, Dan Garrett, a Post Office employee, Vernon Scott, a truck driver for the Baltimore Paper Box Company, and Hattie Matthews, a public school teacher. A significant number of residents did complete high school and several went on to college.

Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Supreme Court Justice from 1967 to 1991, campaigned early on for desegregation in Baltimore County Schools by taking the case of a Cowdensville resident. After Margaret Williams finished 7th grade in 1935 at the one-room school on Garrett Road, there were no high schools in the district for her to attend. Thurgood, Council for the NAACP, sued for Williams' admission to Catonsville High School. They lost their case, however, it was an important ruling used in the Brown decision by the Supreme Court in 1954.

The dwellings in Cowdensville date from the late 19th century to the turn of the 21st century. Evelyn Revels moved into the community in 1973 and constructed her house at 1111 Sulphur Spring Road. Her house was the first construction in the neighborhood since the 1940s. Only two houses have been built since Revels between 1973 and 1991. At the beginning of the 1990s, the community consisted of 27 houses. The long established families in the community include Matthews, Williams, Scott, and Garrett. Other families in the area include Burley, Lynch, Fletcher, Griffin, and Nelson.

The dwellings along Sulphur Spring Road and Garrett Road are the oldest in Cowdensville. The land northeast of the A.M.E. church between Shelbourne and Sulphur Springs Road was sold by Bertha Garrett, widow of Joseph Garrett, to Mack and Mary Brown. It was then developed and called Browns Terrace. The land was divided into small lots averaging approximately one acre each and began to be sold in the mid-1940s.(page 94). The first lot sold was to Stanley Williams at 103 Browns Terrace. Narine Baney bought several of the lots in Browns Terrace in the 1970s for members of his family. The Baney's reside at 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114 Circle Terrace and 107 Browns Terrace. According to the real property assessments of 2002, just over half of the properties in Cowdensville are owner occupied.

ENDNOTES

1. Louis S. Diggs, In Our Voices: A Folk History in Legacy, (Uptown Press, 1998), p. 95.
2. U.S. Census Bureau, 1840 and 1850 U.S. Census, (National Archives).

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3. U.S. Census Bureau, 1870 U.S. Census, (National Archives).
 4. Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877).
 5. U.S. Census Bureau, 1910 U.S. Census, (National Archives).
 6. Diggs, p. 94.
 7. U.S. Census Bureau, 1930 U.S. Census, (National Archives).

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTIES DATING PRIOR TO 1940 (as of October 24, 2002)

1100 Sulphur Spring Road Cowdensville A.M.E. Church -- tax id # 1303470010
Map 108 Parcel 12 P.O. Box 7329
Baltimore, MD 21227
Liber 280 Folio 230

1102 Sulphur Spring Road Darrin Williams -- tax id # 1323500550
Map 108 Parcel 335 1102 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 16252 Folio 28

1106 Sulphur Spring Road Dorothy V. Briscoe -- tax id # 1319070430
Map 108 Parcel 334 1108 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 6093 Folio 754

1107 Sulphur Spring Road David Norman North and Ruby Smith -- tax id # 1316350230
Map 108 Parcel 339 1107 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 16414 Folio 190

1108 Sulphur Spring Road Dorothy Green and Sarah Briscoe -- tax id # 1307580970
Map 108 Parcel 360 1108 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 50 Folio 351

1110 Sulphur Spring Road Dorothy V. Briscoe -- tax id # 1302652120
Map 108 Parcel 362 1108 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 4837 Folio 158

1112 Sulphur Spring Road Thomas C. Day, Jr. and Colleen M. Day -- tax id # 1302650531
Map 108 Parcel 358 1112 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 8653 Folio 348

1114 Sulphur Spring Road John W. and Celestine Burley -- tax id # 1302651710
Map 108 Parcel 337 1114 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 6166 Folio 510

1116 Sulphur Spring Road William L. Nelson, Sr. and Catherine Burley -- tax id # 1323501260
Map 108 Parcel 338 1116 Sulphur Spring Road
Liber 16919 Folio 648

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3 Garrett Avenue
Map 108 Parcel 83

Mildred Louise Williams and Kevin Johnson -- tax id # 1323500190
3 Garrett Avenue
Liber 6292 Folio 131

5 Garrett Avenue
Map 108 Parcel 83

James E. Griffen, Jr.-- tax id # 1307000190
5 Garrett Avenue
Liber 5172 Folio 119

6 Garrett Avenue
Map 108 Parcel 385

Clifton E. and Joan P. Griffin -- tax id # 1307581360
6 Garrett Road
Liber 4809 Folio 660

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 13.529 acres

Acreage of historical setting 13.529 acres

Quadrangle name Relay, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Cowdensville Survey District is located in the Thirteenth District of Baltimore County. Arbutus Memorial Park is to the south, Shelbourne Road is to the northwest, Arbutus Middle School is to the north and northeast, and the southside of Garrett Road is the southeast boundary. This area has been considered Cowdensville since the mid-19th century and has historically been associated with tax map 108.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kristie Baynard, Architectural Historian

organization E.H.T. Traceries

date 10/24/02

street and number 1121 Fifth Street, NW

telephone 202/393-1199

city or town Washington

state DC zip code 20001

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

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Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.

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Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. A History of Baltimore County. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.

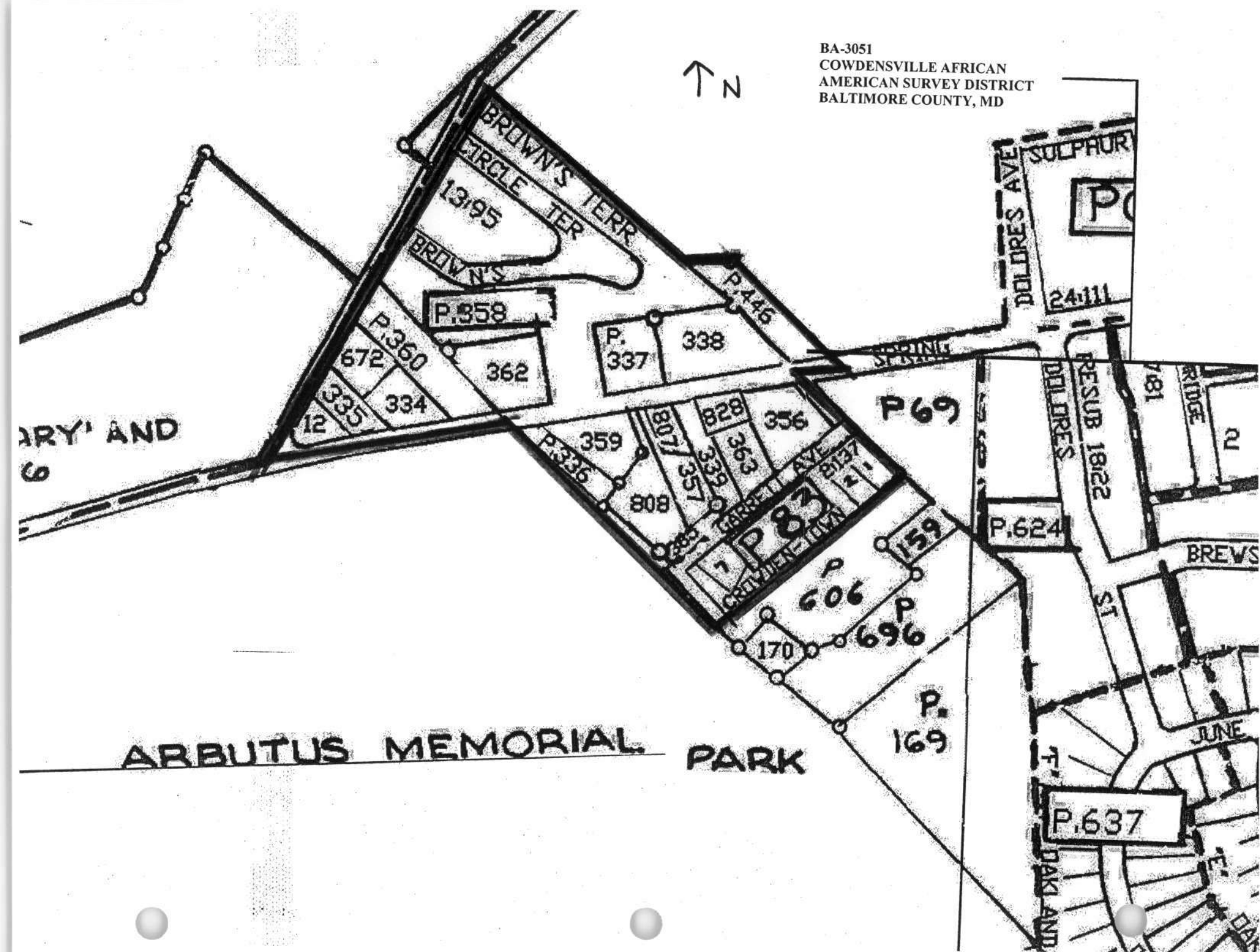
Diggs, Louis S. In Our Voices: A Folk History in Legacy. Uptown Press, 1998.

Erlandson, Robert A. Residents of tiny Cowdensville seek to preserve historic black community. The Sun. Baltimore: September 23, 1991.

Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.

Sidney, J. C. Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

BA-3051
COWDENSVILLE AFRICAN
AMERICAN SURVEY DISTRICT
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD
RELAY, MD USGS MAP





BA-3051
COWDENSVILLE AFRICAN AMERICAN
SURVEY DISTRICT
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD
TRAILERIES

11/2002

MD SHPD

COWDENSVILLE A.M.E. CHURCH, 1100 Sulphur Spring Road,
VIEW LOOKING NORTHEAST

1 of 5



BA-3051

COWDENSVILLE AFRICAN AMERICAN
SURVEY DISTRICT

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

11/2002

MD SHPD

1106 - 1110 SULPHUR SPRING ROAD, LOOKING NE

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COWDENSVILLE AFRICAN AMERICAN SURVEY DISTRICT
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD
TRACERIES
11/2002
MD SHPD
BROWN STERRACE, VIEW LOOKING WEST



BA 3051

CONDENVILLE AFRICAN AMERICAN SURVEY DISTRICT

BALTIMORE County, MD

TRACERIES

11/2002

MD SHPO

105-107 GIRLIE TERRACE, VIEW LOOKING NW

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BA-3051

COWDENSVILLE AFRICAN AMERICAN SURVEY DISTRICT

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

11/2002

MD SHPD

4-6 GARRETT ROAD

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